

CLAIMS

1. An intermediary server comprising:

a storage component that stores an association between a finite state machine and a document-location specifier;

5 a client component that executes a finite state machine corresponding to a mid-point document in order to obtain the mid-point document and a state associated with the mid-point document from a source server; and

a server component that

10 receives a document-location specifier specifying the mid-point document from a client computer,

retrieves the association between the finite state machine and the document-location specifier,

invokes the finite state machine to obtain the mid-point document and the state associated with the mid-point document from the source server, and

15 returns the mid-point document and state associated with the mid-point document to the client computer.

2. The intermediary server of claim 1 wherein stored associations further include a parameter string, and wherein the server component:

20 receives a document-location specifier specifying the mid-point document from a client computer,

retrieves the association between the finite state machine, a parameter string, and the document-location specifier,

25 invokes the finite state machine, passing to the finite state machine the parameter string, to obtain the mid-point document and the state associated with the mid-point document from the source server, and

returns the mid-point document and state associated with the mid-point document to the client computer.

30 3. The intermediary server of claim 2 wherein the storage component is one of:
a database management system;

a searchable list of finite-state-machine/parameter-string/document-location specifier associations stored in memory; and
a file-based storage component.

5 4. The intermediary server of claim 2 wherein document-location specifiers are URLs, a parameter string includes one or more parameter substrings, and each parameter substring specifying a step in a web-page navigation pathway.

10 5. The intermediary server of claim 4 wherein each parameter substring includes one of:
an indication of where to find a next URL; and
a next URL.

6. The intermediary server of claim 5 wherein the client component executes a finite state machine corresponding to a mid-point document by:
15 parsing the parameter string in order to extract each parameter substring in order; and
for each extracted parameter substring,
furnishing a URL specified in the extracted substring to the source server in
order to obtain a document corresponding to the URL from the source server.

20 7. The intermediary server of claim 6 wherein execution of the finite state machine further includes obtaining additional information needed to be supplied along with a URL and supplying the additional information to the source server along with the URL specified in the extracted substring, additional information including one or more of:
an authentication;
25 a cookie;
input-field information.

8. The intermediary server of claim 2
wherein the intermediary server stores a plurality of associations between finite state
30 machines and parameter strings; and
wherein the server component

receives URLs specifying mid-point documents from a plurality of client computers, and

for each received URL

extracts a retrieval key from the received URL;

5 retrieves an association between a finite-state-machine and a parameter-string corresponding to the received URL using the retrieval key,

invokes the finite state machine, furnishing the finite state machine with the parameter string, and

returns a mid-point document and state returned by the finite state machine to the client computer.
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9. A method for returning to a requesting client computer a mid-point document, the method comprising:

receiving a document-location specifier from the client computer specifying the mid-point document;
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finding a stored association between a finite state machine corresponding to the received document-location specifier;

invoking the finite state machine to receive the mid-point document and state associated with the mid-point document from a source server; and

20 returning the mid-point document and state associated with the mid-point document to the client computer.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the stored association further includes a parameter string, and wherein the parameter string is passed to the finite state machine upon invoking the finite state machine.
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11. The method of claim 9 wherein the document-location specifier received from the client computer includes a retrieval key, and finding a stored association between a finite state machine and a parameter string corresponding to the received document-location specifier further includes extracting the retrieval key from the received document-location specifier and
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using the extracted retrieval key to find the stored association between a finite state machine and a parameter string corresponding to the received document-location specifier.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the parameter string includes a number of parameter substrings and wherein invoking the finite state machine with the parameter string to receive the mid-point document and state associated with the mid-point document from a source server further includes:

parsing the parameter string in order to extract each parameter substring in order; and
for each extracted parameter substring,

furnishing a document-location specifier specified in the extracted substring to the source server in order to obtain a document corresponding to the document-location specifier from the source server.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein furnishing a document-location specifier specified in the extracted substring to the source server in order to obtain a document corresponding to the document-location specifier from the source server further includes obtaining additional information needed to be supplied along with a document-location specifier and supplying the additional information to the source server along with the document-location specifier specified in the extracted substring, additional information including one or more of:

an authentication;
a cookie;
input-field information.

14. The method of claim 9 encoded in computer instructions stored in a computer readable medium.